BOOK ON KENNEDY SEES A WIDE PLOT

Origin of French Bestseller Remains a Mystery

By JOHN L. HESS
Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Dec. 31—A book of mysterious origin accusing the entire American power structure of complicity in the assassination of John F. Kennedy has spread through Western Europe and is now crossing the Atlantic.

The book, called "Farewell America" in its English-language edition and "l'Amérique Brûle" ("America Burns") in French, says several dozen persons participated directly in the plot and many more, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, knew about it before the event.

"Farewell America" was printed in Belgium for a company chartered in Liechtenstein, apparently for that purpose. It was marketed in France, with considerable success, by a new company that has no other product, and is now being offered to Americans outside regular trade book channels by a Montreal concern.

The author is listed as James Hepburn. He is described in publicity for the book as an American, but a biography on the cover flap says he was born abroad 34 years ago, went to the London School of Economics, was graduated from the "Institute of Political Studies" in Paris, met Jacqueline Bouvier in 1951, first visited the United States in 1960 and twice met Mr. Kennedy that year.

'Pretty Much a Pseudonym'

In fact, René Lamarré, head of Editions Nouvelles Frontières, the French company marketing the book, affirmed in an interview that "James Hepburn" was actually "pretty much a pseudonym," representing a "group of European and American researchers."

This is supported by author's acknowledgments in the book, in which 16 collaborators in the French edition and 11 in the English are thanked. Only first names are given for most of those thanked, who are listed as living in six countries, including the United States.

Mr. Lamarré said the manuscript had been offered to and rejected by "practically all" American trade publishers before it appeared in West Germany and France last summer. It has been an evident best-seller here; Mr. Lamarré put French sales at 60,000 so far. He said 30,000 copies of the English edition had been printed.

An apparent reason for its rejection by American publishers was the fear of libel action. A number of prominent citizens are accused in the book, either directly or by implication, of having had guilty knowledge of the plot to kill the President.

The book is written in a clear, educated prose, heavily studded with citations from both historic and recent socio-economic sources. The authors are critical of leaders of labor, Negroes and liberals, and of the public in general. But they say the President was actually was "condemned" by a "Committee" of Texas and Louisiana notables. The crime itself is reported as having been committed by a band of professionals directly aided by the Dallas police.

No new evidence is offered to support the allegations, which are generally conclusions or suppositions drawn from previously published material.

New Interest Reported Here

A check of major New York book publishers yesterday turned up only one who could recall having been offered "L'Amérique Brûle" in its original English version.

That publisher was Farrer, Straus & Giroux. Roger Straus Jr., president of the company, said that he had been offered an outline of the book, then called "The Plot," more than a year ago, and had rejected it as containing nothing new on the assassination of President Kennedy.

But several publishers here were reported to be reconsidering their interest in the book, which was displayed last fall at the Frankfurt book fair.

Bookshops in New York said they were not now handling "Farewell America," the title under which "L'Amérique Brule," would reportedly be distributed here.

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